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LONG BEACH GENERAL PLAN

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## A VISION OF OUR FUTURE.

*A city without a vision is a city without a future. It is the purpose of the Long Beach General Plan to articulate a vision which gives direction to the long-range development of our City. The Plan should serve as a stimulus and guide to the multitude of public and private decisions which will be made over the next decade to help Long Beach achieve its vision of the Year 2000.*



## Long Beach 2000, The Strategic Plan.

What is the vision of our future? Hundreds of citizens spent two years preparing Long Beach 2000, The Strategic Plan, which sought to define that vision and to prescribe steps to achieve it. Simply stated, the people of Long Beach have expressed a vision which simultaneously combines small town friendliness and tranquility with big city vitality and economic opportunity. The General Plan sets out to achieve this very difficult balance of the "best of both worlds."

As its name suggests, the General Plan is general in nature. It is also long-range. It sets forth goals, policies and directions. It cannot prescribe specific programs and funding mechanisms to achieve those goals; neither can it dictate the exact zoning which will control the use and development of each parcel of land in the City. Once the people of Long Beach have agreed upon the Plan as their vision for the future, specific programs and zoning actions can be undertaken to realize that vision.

A general plan is also comprehensive, covering the full range of development issues which must be addressed by the City over time. State law requires each general plan to contain seven elements: land use, transportation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. The City of Long Beach is now updating the first three of these elements. This summary focuses upon the 1988 revision of the land use element.

The land use element is specifically directed toward prescribing the proper long-range use and development of land in the City. As such, it is perhaps the most important of the seven elements, integrating the other six and providing their driving force.

## An Historical Perspective on the General Plan

Long Beach prepared its first general plan in 1958. This was in an era in which the national, post-war mentality was directed toward geographic expansion and population growth on a very large scale. The plan reflected the "bigger is better" philosophy of the times by permitting very high density development producing a population potential of approximately 1.5 million!

The 1958 general plan served the City for two decades. To the disappointment of some, however, its grandiose goals were never achieved. Indeed, population grew slowly and downtown deteriorated almost to abandonment.

In 1978, Long Beach prepared a new general plan which placed major emphasis upon investment, development, and reinvestment, especially in the older parts of the City. It called for the redevelopment of downtown, and emphasized the production of affordable housing. The 1978 Plan scaled down ultimate population growth to a more manageable 450,000. Nevertheless, it painted a broad brush of higher densities across most of the City's older neighborhoods.

Today we recognize that Long Beach has achieved many of the goals of the 1978 General Plan. Downtown redevelopment has been a tremendous success. In ten years there were 50,000 jobs created and 18,500 housing units constructed, many in the affordable range. Population increased by 13 percent, to a 1988 total of 415,800.

With these successes, however, have come some unanticipated consequences. Growth has brought crowded schools and playgrounds. Economic development has spawned traffic and parking problems. Housing development has often disrupted older neighborhoods.

The time has come to refine our goals and to redefine our priorities. The 1988 General Plan must build upon the successes of the past, while identifying and resolving the problems which are inherent in continued future growth and prosperity.

## Goals for the Year 2000.

In 1986, Long Beach completed the most extensive citizen planning effort in its history. More than 150 residents and business leaders worked in seven task forces to outline long-range goals and policies for development of the City of Long Beach through the Year 2000. The product of this major effort, Long Beach 2000: The Strategic Plan, establishes the goals for the 1988 General Plan. The Strategic Plan formulated 15 broad-ranging goals, eight of which are most relevant in guiding the Land Use Element of the General Plan:

**Managed Growth:** Long Beach accepts the population and economic growth anticipated through the Year 2000, and intends to guide that growth to have an overall beneficial impact upon the City's quality of life.

**Economic Development:** Long Beach will pursue economic development which focuses upon international trade, while maintaining and expanding its historic economic strengths in aerospace, bio-medicine and tourism.

**Downtown Revitalization:** Long Beach will build its downtown into a multi-purpose activity center of regional significance, emphasizing a quality physical environment, a pedestrian focus, and a wide variety of activities and architectural styles.

**New Housing Construction:** Long Beach encourages the development of 24,000 new housing units through the Year 2000, with emphasis upon filling the gaps which exist or are anticipated in certain sectors of the City's housing market. In the immediate future, such emphasis should be upon for-sale housing for first-time homebuyers and upon upscale residential development in and around the downtown area.

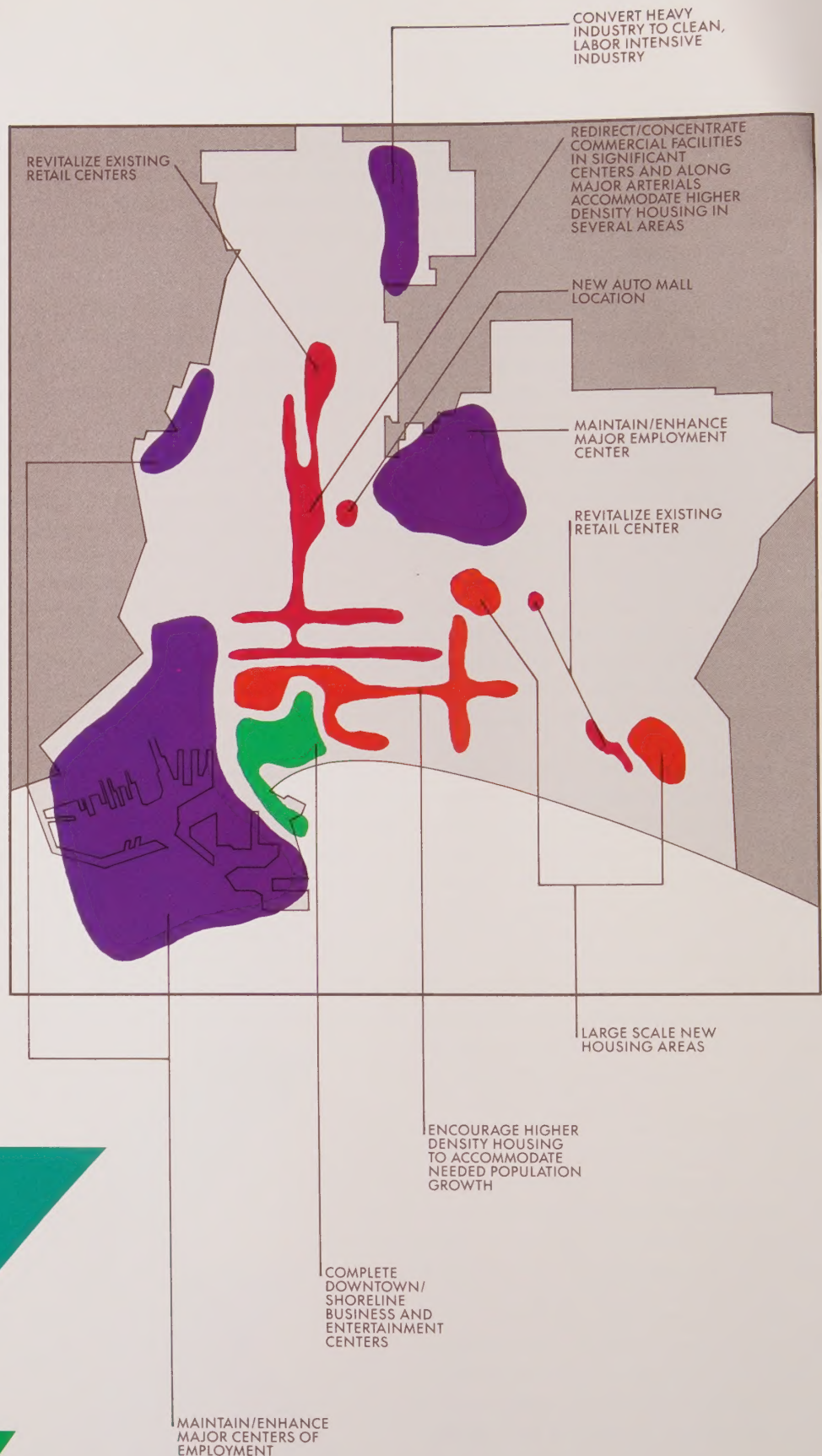


## Generalized Concept Plan.

The map to the right presents a generalized concept of some of the fundamental policies of the land use element of the General Plan. Those policies are represented geographically by the outlined areas on the map and are identified by abbreviated policy statements. They include concerns about new housing, higher density housing, arterial functions, and retail and employment opportunities. The largest areas on the map — those portions not encircled by dark outlines — are primarily residential in nature and are governed by the policy expression "Maintain existing densities. Preserve and enhance neighborhood qualities."

In such a broad generalization of long range policies in a complex, built-up city, it is to be expected that many important details will be omitted for the sake of simplicity. For example, there may be small areas of increased residential density recommended within the broad area labeled "Maintain...densities," but these are not significant and do not, therefore, negate the validity of the overall policy representation. Similarly, certain arterials not shown on the map are programmed for some commercial development, but as it is not to be "concentrated," or significant in its retail impact, they are omitted from the generalization.

Specific details for each residential neighborhood, activity center, and major arterial corridor are to be found in the body of the text of the Land Use Element, and in the maps accompanying that text.



**All Uncolored Areas:  
Maintain Existing Densities.  
Preserve and Enhance  
Neighborhood Qualities.**



***Affordable Housing:*** Long Beach views its existing housing stock as its greatest resource of affordable housing, and will stimulate and support continued maintenance and reinvestment in that housing stock. It will take advantage of every available State and Federal program to make its housing affordable to its population, but it will not sacrifice long-term quality for short-term affordability in new or rehabilitated housing.

***Neighborhood Emphasis:*** Long Beach recognizes the strong neighborhood to be the essential building block of a city-wide quality living environment, and will assist and support citizen efforts to maintain and strengthen their neighborhoods.

***Facilities Maintenance:*** Long Beach will maintain its physical facilities and public rights-of-way at a high level of functional and aesthetic quality, manifesting the pride of the citizens in their City and ensuring that future generations need not bear the burden of deferred maintenance.

***Functional Transportation:*** Long Beach will maintain or improve the current ability to move people and goods to and from development centers while preserving and protecting residential neighborhoods.

Of all of the goals, the first, “managed growth,” most clearly defines the direction and purpose of the 1988 General Plan. Long Beach has historically prospered during periods of economic and population growth. The present growth cycle, however, differs from those of the past, in that there remains little vacant land to develop. Increasingly, growth will require recycling and increased density. The way in which new development is designed and the manner in which the impacts of increased density are mitigated will determine the degree to which the quality of life of our City is preserved and enhanced. Therefore, the goal of accepting increased growth is conditioned by the very important phrase: “...to guide that growth to have an overall beneficial impact upon the city’s quality of life.”

The goals of the 1988 Plan correspond closely to those of its predecessor blueprint of 1978. The revision is more of a “mid-course correction” than a complete transformation of policies. Nevertheless, there is a significant change in emphasis. If this emphasis could be condensed into one phrase, it might be “quality instead of quantity.” There is more concern now about the quality of the downtown pedestrian experience, the preservation of historic structures, the ambiance of the neighborhoods, the excellence of architectural style, and the rounding out of the City as a pleasant and livable place for now and the future. More attention is concentrated on the activity centers of the City—places in which to shop and work—and on the functions of the City’s major arterials and the land uses which front them.

There are greater restrictions on high density residential developments in this plan, but there are still sufficient quantities along thoroughfares and in the downtown area to support the expected population growth. There is a strong acknowledgement in this plan that the residential neighborhoods are the heart of Long Beach and must be preserved if the City is to realize its potential as one of the finest places in California in which to live and work.

## The Plan in Summary.

The Draft Land Use Element of the General Plan constitutes over 250 pages of text and maps. The following is a summary of the document in a few short paragraphs. The reader is encouraged to review the entire document for a full understanding of the background for the recommendations and for a detailed explanation of the specific proposals.

***Accepting Growth:*** The Plan provides for continued growth in population and economic activity in accordance with the following forecasts:

	1988	Forecast
Population	415,800	450,600
Housing Units	170,130	186,130
Employment	198,600	252,600
Jobs/Housing Ratio	1.2	1.4

These forecasts portend several basic changes in direction for the City. First, the pace of population growth is expected to slow beginning around 1992, after the very rapid increase of the period from about 1978. This means that housing development will also slow and construction energy will be redirected to the retail, employment, and tourism sectors. Second, the favorable ratio between jobs and housing which the City now enjoys is expected to be maintained and improved as the economy diversifies even further. Most new employment opportunities will be located in downtown, at the Port, airport, and on land presently occupied by heavy, land-extensive industry which will become less economically viable. Finally, it is expected that the retail economy of Long Beach will begin to generate the amount of sales commensurate with the size and economic strength of the community. Growth in this sector is expected to occur primarily in existing shopping/activity centers and along the recycled frontages of some thoroughfares.

***Maintaining Quality:*** The most important issue addressed by the General Plan is how to accommodate the growth forecast for the City while maintaining and improving the overall quality of life. This is no easy task. As noted above, population growth can strain existing schools, playgrounds and public services; improperly placed and designed high density housing can disrupt traditional neighborhoods. Increased economic activity means increased traffic, which can ultimately lead to severe traffic congestion and disruption of once comfortable residential areas and local shopping districts. The challenge is to manage growth in such a manner as to take full advantage of its positive attributes while minimizing its negative impacts.





The Plan calls for concentrating construction of new apartments and condominiums in proximity to growing employment centers, and along the major arterial corridors which provide access to employment centers. This yields several positive results as follows:

▲ It reduces home-to-work travel time. Employees will have the opportunity to drive short distances to work, take a convenient bus, or even walk. The payoff is decreased travel time and frustration, reduced traffic congestion, less energy consumption, and cleaner air.

▲ It protects stable, traditional neighborhoods from intrusion of higher density housing. Experience has shown that dense apartment structures are incompatible with lower density neighborhoods, in both visual and functional terms. Repeated intrusions can change the character of a neighborhood and affect its quality of life and property values.

The Plan recommends that new playgrounds be built and that parks and schools be expanded in those areas of the City where population growth is expected. Unless development of these facilities keeps pace with the rate of housing construction, existing facilities will be severely strained, and the level of service will decline for everyone. In light of the present financial constraints upon the City and School District, it is likely that new development will be asked to bear some of the burden of cost to construct these needed facilities.

The redevelopment of downtown could more than double the number of jobs in this concentrated area, which could lead to more than twice the present number of automobile trips. Port growth is projected to double the number of truck movements, and triple the number of train trips by 2020. Such economic growth will bring many benefits to the City and its residents. Its full potential, however, will never be realized unless we can overcome the transportation problems which it will create.

As discussed above, the land use element of the General Plan attempts to mitigate the transportation impacts of economic growth by locating jobs and housing in close proximity to each other. Other solutions (e.g., intersection improvements, grade separations, traffic signal coordination, curbside parking removal, staggered work hours, car and van pooling, etc.) will be presented in the Transportation Element of the General Plan.

*Conserving Neighborhoods:* Long Beach is a city of neighborhoods, most of which are attractive, safe, comfortable and convenient places in which to live. Preservation and enhancement of such stable residential neighborhoods is at the heart of the General Plan. In many instances, it is recommended that allowable densities be lowered to insure neighborhood protection and to stimulate reinvestment in well-built, older homes. To some extent this represents a reversal of the 1978 policy which was to encourage recycling of older areas of the City by permitting higher density development.

Our existing stock of housing is a valuable resource. Recent experience has shown that an increasing number of people appreciate the character, price, yard space and neighborhood amenities that older housing offers, and are willing to invest their time and money to preserve and restore it.

*Revitalizing Activity Centers:* People need more than just the peace and tranquility of home. They also need the excitement and opportunity of interaction with other people, at the workplace, the shopping center, the school, or the concert. The places where these interactions take place are designated by the Plan as "activity centers." Whereas the Plan seeks to protect the peace and quiet of the City's neighborhoods, it also seeks to inject new life and vitality into its activity centers. This will provide increased opportunity for all of our residents for jobs, for shopping, and for pursuit of those things which enrich their lives.

The Plan identifies each of the major activity centers and analyzes its role in the larger city. The purpose of these analyses is to bring a focus to the centers which has not existed in the past. This is particularly true of shopping centers, such as Bixby Knolls, Los Altos, and Marina Pacifica, which have not provided the Long Beach retail market with facilities, products and services equal to their potential.

A new multi-purpose center is recommended for development around the Memorial Hospital Medical Center to bring needed focus to a part of the City which now is very underserved.

Employment centers are recommended for protection so that the City can maintain a favorable job-housing balance into the future. Most areas shown on the 1978 Plan for heavy industrial uses are converted to light/clean industrial uses by this plan for environmental, economic, and job/housing balance reasons.

*Strengthening Arterial Corridors:* Arterial corridors are those major streets, together with their abutting land uses, which provide access from homes to activity centers and which provide major entries to and passageways through our City. This General Plan recognizes arterial corridors as a special component of the City's structure and identifies the land use and transportation relationships which are unique to each. The goals of this analysis are as follows:

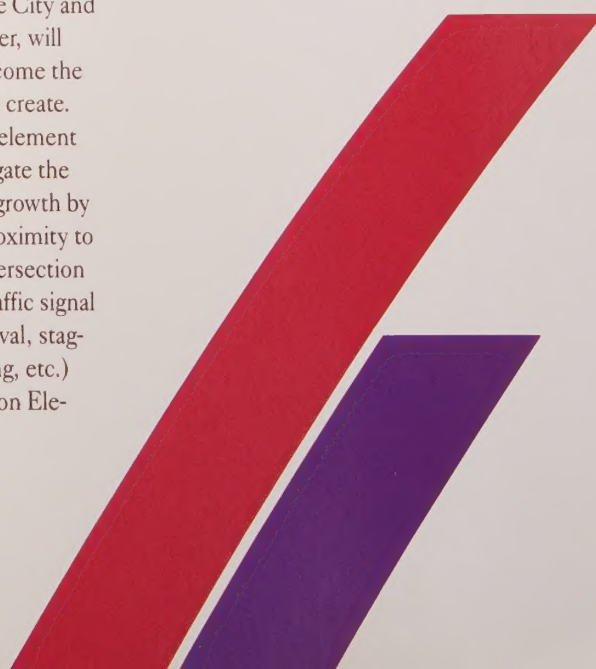
▲ To improve overall traffic carrying capacity and to reduce conflicts between parking/access needs and through traffic requirements as much as possible;

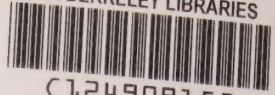
▲ To reduce the total number of strip commercial streets in the City to a limited few;

▲ To increase the amount and quality of moderate and higher density housing along selected arterials, thereby helping to reduce the pressures for those types of housing in the more stable neighborhoods of the City; and

▲ To improve the appearance of arterial corridors in general, recognizing that these corridors provide most travellers through our City with their initial, and perhaps lasting, impression of Long Beach.

Land use policies proposed by this plan, therefore, are directed toward achieving these objectives while, at the same time, making the arterial corridors better neighbors of the adjacent residential communities. Specific recommendations regarding the transportation functions of the arterials will be found in the Transportation Element of the General Plan.



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